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3 SPECIAL FREEZE DAMAGE REPORT
TEXAS AND FLORIDA COMMERCIAL VEGETABLES

TEXAS: Freezing temperatures on February 12 damaged vegetables in south Texas with injury ranging from very slight for hardy crops to complete losses for some tender vegetables. A preliminary appraisal indicates only a moderate immediate reduction in production of vegetables because of freeze damage, but it is expected that the output of spring crops will be curtailed and harvest will be delayed. Minimum temperatures ranged from slightly above freezing in the eastern end of the lower Rio Grande Valley to lows which were well below freezing in the western end of the Valley where most serious damage was sustained.

Beets and carrots are reported to be in satisfactory condition, having escaped with only slight damage to tops. Quality of matured broccoli was lowered and leaf damage was extensive. Mature cabbage was in generally good condition immediately following the freeze and no loss of consequence is expected in advanced fields of this crop. Young cabbage, however, suffered considerable damage and the tonnage for March harvest appears to have been substantially reduced. Freezing injury lowered quality and reduced the daily production of lettuce, but only mature fields appear to have been seriously damaged. Advanced immature lettuce is in fairly good condition and young fields escaped injury. Damage to onions was limited practically to dry-land crops in the Raymondville section and a few irrigated fields at Raymondville and the Lower Valley. At Raymondville, a few advanced fields of dry-land onions were hurt beyond hope of recovery and are expected to be harvested at a heavy loss of yields. Younger plantings are hurt badly and if rains do not occur soon considerable acreage will be abandoned and production will be cut drastically. Damage to irrigated onions was spotted and appeared to be mainly in fields with plants either nearly matured or those that had been effected by blight or other plant disease. Considerable irrigated acreage of advanced onions in these areas maintained a good appearance. The younger acreage, although slightly delayed, is in generally good condition. The acreage expected to be harvested in February provided weather permits, will require about 10 days for plants to cure before shipping is under way. Most fields of dry-land crops in the Coastal Bend received good rains prior to the cold spell and the slight tip burn on some plants was caused more by the hard winds that followed than the cold weather.

Tender vegetables for spring harvest suffered considerable damage. In the west end of the Lower Valley many open cantaloup fields that had emerged were killed but capped acreage appears to have escaped extensive damage. Cantaloups in the central and east sections of the Lower Valley escaped serious losses. All early sweet corn fields in the Lower Valley were destroyed and much of the young acreage that was up suffered damage ranging from total loss to slight injury. Not all of the acreage of this crop that was lost will be replanted and harvest will be delayed until early May. Tomatoes for early spring harvest suffered the greatest loss from the freeze but it is still too early to appraise the magnitude of this loss accurately. Both advanced and younger fields in some of the coldest locations were destroyed. Many early fields on which harvest was scheduled to begin in volume in early April were banked in advance of the freeze. This protection appears to have prevented total loss of vines, but foliage was killed to the extent that these fields have been set back and are not likely to come into production any earlier than the young fields. Stands of young tomatoes were thinned by the freeze but the bulk of the acreage is expected to be saved even though stands in many fields will be poor. The acreage of tomatoes replanted is not expected to be great enough to offset the combined loss in acreage and reduced stands resulting from the freeze. Early season production will be light and the total crop produced will probably be substantially reduced. Watermelons in both the Lower Valley and at Palfurrias were practically a total loss but most of this acreage will be replanted. However, harvest will be delayed in those early sections.

FLORIDA: Freezing temperatures in Florida the morning of February 12 and 13 caused some damage to tender vegetables in all sections of that State. Lowest temperatures occurred the morning of February 13 but because of a low dew point and wind no frost occurred in south and central Florida which lessened the damage to susceptible crops in that area. In south Florida, cold winds caused the most damage. Green beans, pole beans, cucumbers, and squash in this area suffered leaf burn which is expected to result in a lowering of yield and quality of these crops. Some young fields of cucumbers and squash were damaged to the point that replanting will be necessary. Young tomatoes in the Fort Pierce and Immokalee-Fort Myers District escaped serious injury but their development was retarded by the cold weather. Tomatoes around Manatee, Ruskin and Wauchula suffered heavy losses but sufficient plants are available for resetting so that no reduction in acreage is anticipated. Tomatoes at Webster and Center Hill were severely damaged by freezing temperatures but enough plants were saved for resetting in this area. At Oxford and McIntosh, young tomatoes were just emerging and considerable acreage will need to be replanted. A substantial acreage of cucumbers at Wauchula will be reseeded. Peppers at Plant City suffered spotted damage and resetting is in progress in this area. Strawberries in the Plant City area were damaged for the fourth time by the recent freeze which caused a substantial loss of bloom. At Hastings, about one-third of the potato acreage was up and the tops were frozen. However, no damage to stems was reported. The potato crop in this section is expected to be delayed about a week to ten days by this damage.

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